

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY PROCEDURES FOR THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

The Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is the final construction document issued by the Building Official to authorize occupancy of a structure upon completion of all building issues. Section 116.1 of the 2006 Virginia Uniform Building Code (USBC) states:

"A certificate of occupancy, indicating completion of the work for which a permit was issued, shall be obtained prior to any occupancy of any building or structure, except as provided for in this section generally and as specifically provided for in Section 113.8 for additions or alterations."

The Certificate of Occupancy follows the final approval of all issued trade and building permits, the completion of required site plan items and/or permit or BAR conditions, and the completion of the special use permit (SUP or DSUP) requirements agreed to at the beginning of the construction process. The purpose of this handout is to explain the CO process for the City of Alexandria, the responsibility of the applicant, and the responsibility of each City agency in recommending approval of the CO to the Building Official.

In Alexandria, the CO process begins and ends with the Office of Building & Fire Code Administration (CA). It is recommended that the CO be applied for at the same time that the initial construction permits and plans are submitted for review. This usually speeds up the CO process as the project nears completion and settlement or move-in dates are being decided.

While CA administers the CO process, inspections must be coordinated with, and approvals obtained from, the following agencies:

- Planning and Zoning (P&Z) and, when applicable, the Board of Architectural Review (BAR)
- Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
- Health Department (HD), when applicable
- Code Administration (CA)

Separate inspections are conducted by each agency to ensure that the items under their jurisdiction have been completed by the applicant. For projects obligated to pay into the Housing Trust Fund, the approval of Housing is also needed before a CO is issued. Health Department (HD) approval is required for projects that involve:

- Food (restaurants, hotel or school kitchens, quick marts, stores, etc.)
- Child or adult care (day care centers, retirement homes, schools, etc.)
- Doctor or dental offices
- Public swimming pools and spas
- Health or massage therapy establishments
- Nail and hair salons
- Any business that involves food or health related matters.

It is recommended that a two week "cushion" be allowed between the completion of construction and the intended settlement date, "move-in" date, or grand opening event requiring an issued CO. This two-week period will allow for any noted deficiencies to be corrected in time for the scheduled settlement/opening without delaying the CO. While Code Admin usually conducts CO inspections on the date requested, Transportation & Environmental Services, Planning & Zoning, BAR, and the Health Department require three to five days for their inspections. It is important to have one site person designated to coordinate the inspection process, communicate with the inspection agencies to resolve any inspection disapprovals, and then follow up with Code Administration to obtain the issued CO. For disapproved inspections, the specific inspection agency should be contacted to reschedule the inspection once the issue is resolved.

- Planning and Zoning \ BAR 703.838.4666
- Transportation & Environmental Services 703.838.4324
- Health Department 703.838.4400
- Code Administration 703.838.4360

Planning and coordination by site personnel is essential as it is usually not possible to obtain the CO on the same day that the inspections are conducted.

Even with the best planning and communications, it is sometimes necessary to request to move furniture in or stock goods prior to the CO being approved and issued. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and require the approval of the Building Official. A **Stocking Permit** may be issued for this purpose on a form available from CA. Before the request will be considered, installed fire alarm and/or sprinkler systems must have passed field acceptance tests. **For residential requests, it is important to advise prospective homeowners that their household goods may not be covered by insurance (damage or theft) when the house has not yet gone to settlement. They may wish to check with their insurance company for advice on interim coverage.** It is important to remember that an approved stocking permit is for goods only; it is not authorization for people to occupy or sleep in the structure.

While generally discouraged, it is sometimes possible for the Building Official to approve the temporary occupancy of a structure in accordance with section 116.1.1 of the 2006 USBC. In order for a temporary CO to be considered, the portion or portions of the structure to be occupied must not pose a danger to life or public welfare. This means that required fire alarm systems, suppression systems and/or sprinkler systems must be installed and have passed field acceptance tests; common area issues are completed, pertinent accessibility requirements are complete; and, that there are no access/egress issues which would endanger the building occupants. Usually, a temporary CO is considered when the building components have been approved, but there are outstanding site issues (i.e. required landscaping or plants not installed; parking lot striping not completed, etc.) which prohibit the approval of a permanent CO by all review agencies. When requesting a temporary CO, appropriate time frames must still be considered as all review agencies must give their recommendations to the building official.

To eliminate confusion about what a Certificate of Occupancy looks like, a sample copy is attached. The CO should not be confused with final inspection tickets for issued building and trade permits.

If you have any questions about when a CO is required, applying for a CO, or the status of a CO in the inspection process, please call Code Administration on **703.838.4360**.

REMEMBER

No Issued CO = No Settlement/Grand Opening/Occupancy of the Building!

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

In order to be ready for the CO inspection, please use the following agency checklist to make sure that the project is ready for CO approval. If you have any questions about what each City agency requires or will be inspecting for, please contact them on the telephone number provided. For disapproved inspections, please contact the disapproving agency to reschedule the inspection.

Planning & Zoning (requires 3-5 inspection days)

703.838.4666

Conditions of the approved Site Plan are met
Conditions of the approved SUP are met
Plantings/landscaping
Placement of exterior air conditioner condenser units
Unit location survey is submitted and approved
Height Survey is submitted and approved
Size and Availability of Parking Spaces
Screening Requirements are met
Fence Height and Design, where applicable, are appropriate
No Obstruction to EAE
Deck Size is in accordance with approved plans
Special Paving Requirements are met

Transportation & Environmental Services (requires 3 inspection days)

703.838.4324

- ☐ Conditions of the approved Site Plan are met
- ☐ Conditions of the approved SUP are met
- ☐ There is free access to the building to be occupied
- ☐ If applicable, fence area off to separate it from construction area
- ☐ Building/House numbers are posted
- ☐ Erosion and sediment control conditions of site plan are met
- ☐ Base pavement installed in roadways
- ☐ Storm and sanitary sewers are clean and functional (not blocked)
- ☐ Emergency Vehicle Easement signs are installed
- ☐ Fire Hydrants are installed and painted by Maintenance Division (703.838.4488)
- ☐ Accessible Parking Spaces are properly located, signed, sized and marked
- ☐ Street names signs are installed
- ☐ Street and site area are clean and free of mud and construction debris

Code Administration (requires 1-3 inspection days)

703.838.4360

- ☐ All trade permits have received final approval
 - ☐ Electrical ☐ Plumbing ☐ Mechanical
 - ☐ Fire Protection Systems

- ☐ Installed Fire Alarm and/or Sprinkler system is operable
- ☐ Installed Knox Boxes
- ☐ Building permit has received final approval
- ☐ Emergency Vehicle Signs (EVE) are posted
- ☐ Fire Prevention Code Permits are applied for where needed for places of assembly (i.e. Restaurants, Taverns, Dining Areas; Party Rooms; Meeting Rooms; etc.), storage of hazardous materials, etc.
- ☐ Accessibility requirements are met

Health Department (requires 3-5 inspection days)

703 838-4400

- **Food Establishments**

- ☐ Installed kitchen, food preparation/storage/display equipment is installed & functional
- ☐ Hood system/s is/are installed and tested
- ☐ Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chapter 2, and the adopted FDA Food Code are met
- ☐ Adequate Lighting
- ☐ Plumbing fixtures installed properly (i.e. garbage disposal, grease interceptors)

- **Personal Hygiene Establishments**

- ☐ Requirements of City Code Title 11, Chapter 7 are met

- **Swimming Pools**

- ☐ Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chapter 20-6 are met

- **Massage Establishments**

- ☐ Requirements of City Code, Title 11, Chapter 4.1 are met

- **Dry Cleaning or Coin Operated Laundry**

- ☐ Requirements of City Code, Title 9, Chapter 4 or 5 are met

Housing (internal process; no field inspections conducted)

703.838.4990

- ☐ Money obligated to Housing Trust Fund is paid

*****Refer to Attachments – Samples: CO and Temporary CO*****

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
Office of Building and Fire Code Administration
301 King Street, Suite 4200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-4360

CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

CASE NUMBER: OCC2008-01234_____ **DATE ISSUED:** 12/27/2008 **MAX. OCCUPANCY** 8

SITE ADDRESS		PARCEL NO: 50181000
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04
ZONING: CDD#9	Other Zoning:	TRACT: ?
PROPOSED USE: Residential		
USBC 2006		
OWNER:		
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:		NA
USE GROUP:		R-3
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:		5A
Sprinklered: YES []		NO []
Modification: YES []		NO []
Signed _____		Building Official

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Mailing Address:

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
Office of Building & Fire Code Administration
301 King Street, Suite 4200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-4360

TEMPORARY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

CASE NUMBER: OCC2008-01234 **DATE ISSUED:** _____ **MAX. OCCUPANCY** 7

SITE ADDRESS		PARCEL NO:	
50181000			
MAP: 058.2	LOT: 01	BLOCK: 04	
ZONING: CDD#9	Other Zoning:	TRACT: ?	
PROPOSED USE: Residential			
USBC 2006 Thirty day temporary C.O. Issued pending final approval from Planning and Development. TEMP C.O. EXPIRES MARCH 4, 2009.			
OWNER:			
PROPOSED OCCUPANT:		NA	
USE GROUP:		R-3	
CONSTRUCTION TYPE:		5A	
Sprinklered: YES []		NO []	
Modification: YES []		NO []	
Signed _____		Building Official _____	

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Mailing Address: